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Speleo Spiel

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers

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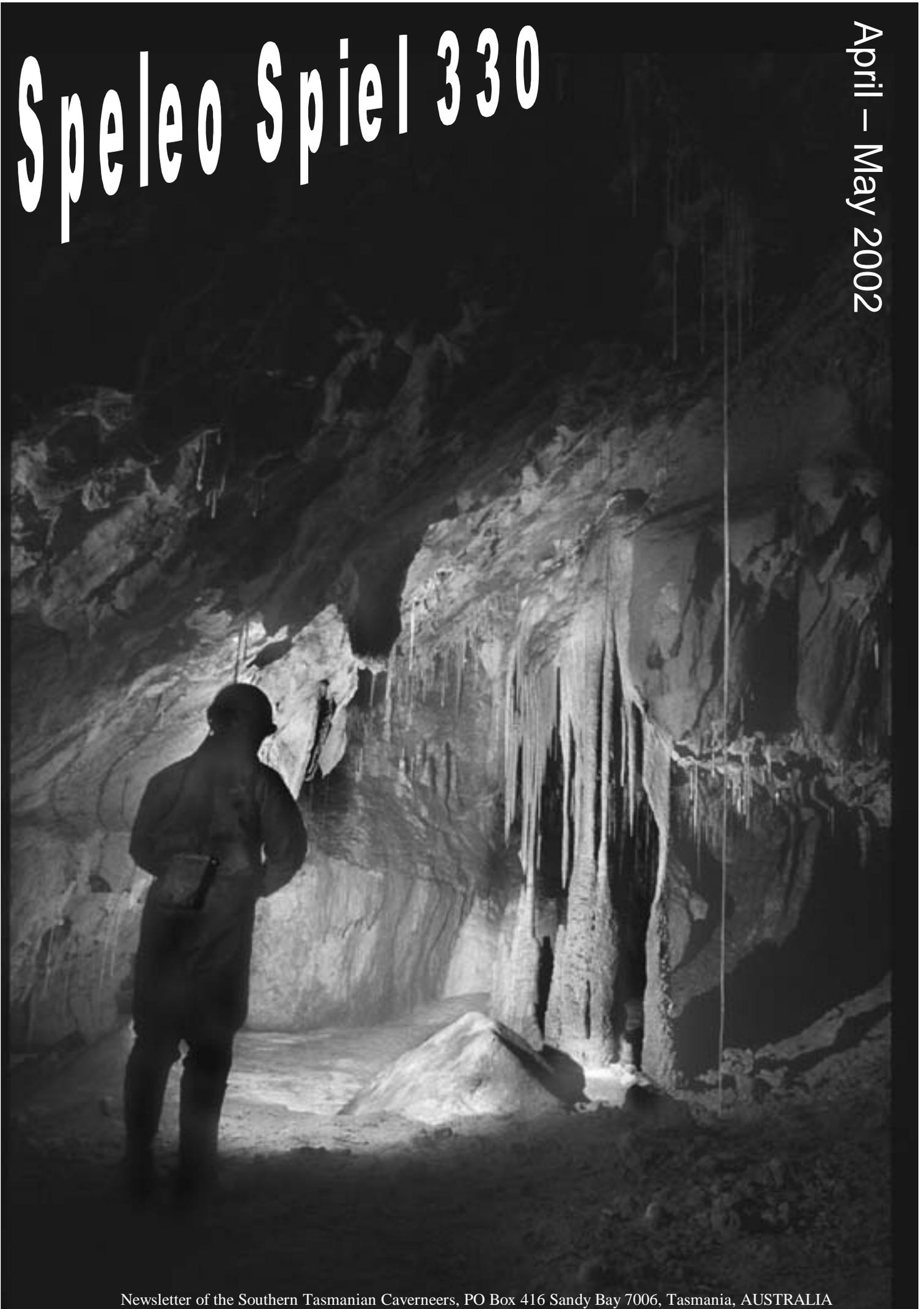
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Speleo Spiel 330

April – May 2002



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Front Cover: *Photo by Joe Farrell*
Steve Phipps's cover debut! He is in Frankcombe Cave being exceptionally careful near the 3+ m straw on the right.

Back Cover: *Photo by Joe Farrell*
Club guest Grace Cumming in Remarkable Cave, a specky walk-through sea cave on the Tasman Peninsular.

STC was formed from the *Tasmanian Caverneering Club*, the *Southern Caving Society* and the *Tasmanian Cave and Karst Research Group*. **STC** is the modern variant of the Oldest Caving Club in Australia.



The Speleo Spiel

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Deadstoryhall

Well here we are in the second half of July and you can now read about what went on in April and May! Yes I admit that's very poor, but this month's excuses are correspondingly more credible, being exams and a holiday job with bizarre hours. Anyway, you could take the view that Spiels are a retrospective account of the caving and politics that occurred during a period - they are the primary info source for the archive and therefore not time critical. Realistically, the list server and monthly meetings keep us up to date with gossip and trip planning. And those who want to be involved in that invariably use those means. Correct me if I'm wrong.

Once again, thanks to everyone who contributed to this Spiel and even the next one... We are a lucky club in that people are diligent with recording their adventures and sharing them.

Remember that if you're an STC member in another state you can still email/post me trip reports. Even if it wasn't officially an STC trip, I can still include them in the Spiel. It's nice to know what our members are up to.

Don't be afraid to write flippantly, creatively or just plain humorously - it makes varied reading. Good luck getting through the mountains of text in this issue. Joe.

Stuff 'n Stuff

Thanks Albert

Apologies and thanks to Albert Goede who wrote Prof. Carey's obituary last issue. I neglected to acknowledge his authorship with the obituary.

Social Secretary

Thanks to Janine for being our new social secretary. She was voted in at the last meeting.

ASF Conference in Tasmania

In 2005 STC will be hosting ASF's annual conference, most likely in the first Week of January. The opportunity for us to host the conference only comes

around once every 14 years or so. We suspect we will call it Tas Trog 2, after the name of the last conference down here.

EGM

An EGM is to be held on Wednesday August 7th with a view to modifying our constitution in the light of ASF's new insurance policy. Official notice is either enclosed with this Spiel or will be sent by snail mail to those who download their Spiel.

Kubla Leaders

At last some Kubla Khan leaders have been officially recognised. This will fill the recent shortage of people with time and experience to take trips for their own club and visiting clubs.

The people PWS now recognise include Jeff Butt, Steve Bunton, Hugh Fitzgerald, and Ric Tunney.

Rope Washing Bliss

Gavin Brett, a Victorian STC member presented us with a high-tech home made rope washer when he was down for the Winter Solstice event. It has been tested and given the thumbs up by the Wise man. Thanks Gavin.

Forward Program

Not much going down due to crap weather and secrecy.

Wednesday Social Meeting23 August

- TBA

Cyclops Pot.....Pick a date

- Alan is keen to run a trip and wants cavers. Trevor reckons there's a lead that will connect into the Little Grunt system at Ida Bay. Tempting?

Kubla Khan.....30 November

- This is subject to confirmation but start hassling to be one of the 6 now.

STC Christmas Party..... 14 - 15 December

- This date is subject to confirmation, and the venue will probably be Francistown where all the jolliest convivialities happen.

P-Hanger Rebolting Program: Mini-Martin (IB8): 6 March 2002

By Jeff Butt

Party: Alan Jackson, Geoff Wise, Jeff Butt.

Continuing on from rebolting Owl Pot on 1/3/2002, today we were headed for Mini-Martin.

Mini-Martin, with it's 110 m entrance pitch is popular with mainland visitors; indeed I have guided two groups through this cave over the last couple of months.

Most visitors opt to walk out Exit Cave, rather than prussik back up Mini-Martin! Having one 110 m and two 30 m pitches, Mini-Martin is not suited to pull-through's like Midnight Hole is.

Mini-Martin is equipped with 5 bolts, 4 spits and one badly rusted 'carrot'. The 110 m entrance pitch has an excellent natural anchor rebelay about 5 m down; this

gives virtually a free-hang, though there sometimes is a slight glancing rub about half way down this pitch. At the top of the third pitch, 10 cm from the existing 'carrot' is another that has broken off. This bolt normally fills visitors with a degree of 'fear', especially if they don't have a suitable hanger and have to resort to a prussik loop form of attachment to it. On my first visit to this cave in ~1988, there were only two bolts in Mini-Martin, a spit at the top of the second pitch and the 'carrot' mentioned above. Over the last 14 years three new spits have 'appeared', but this time I would say that all are justified.....gone are the days of IRT (Indestructible Rope Techniques)!

Today I had Alan and Geoff in tow; this trip was a bit of a 'step-up' from Owl Pot, their last trip, but I was confident in their abilities. We headed in with a large load of gear. The track work carried out by Arthur Clarke et. al. on the Skinner track, meant that thirty-minute creek was again back to being 30 minutes from the saddle at the top of the quarry, instead of 40 minutes due to stepping over all the tree-falls. Despite the recent work by Arthur et. al. there are a number of new logs over the track....the work never ceases! On my trip to Mini-Martin on 14/2/2002 I spent several hours bow-sawing along the Mini-Martin track. With both tracks cleared, we were at Mini-Martin just over an hour from the car.

We zipped down Mini-Martin; I took Geoff and Alan down to the Exit streamway for their first glimpse inside Exit cave before we headed back up the third pitch for some work.

At the top of the third pitch, after some consideration I decided the best place for the first P-hanger was about 1.2 m below the existing spit. This gives a free-hang to the floor. After this hole was drilled I ascended and we drilled a second hole about 0.5 m above the existing

'carrot'. The existing spit proved problematic to remove; my spit-removal device broke off in the spit; which meant that this defunct spit was 'bashed' and covered with glue and drill dust. The rebelay P-hanger was the first bolt I'd installed whilst hanging on rope; this does make it a somewhat trickier process, but with care, overalls opened above the chest harness as a convenient pocket and an empty pack to put things everything can be handled without any mess. After the top P-hanger was installed and my assistants were on their way up, the old 'carrot' was then bashed off and the stumps of both carrots rehabilitated.

At the head of the second pitch, one new hole was drilled. We then altered the rigging to free one of the two spits and drilled it out. This proved to be quite an arm-tiring process with the drill held at head-height. We then removed the spit at the base of the 110 m entrance pitch and drilled a P-hanger hole. Whilst Geoff headed up the big pitch, Alan and I glued the three P-hangers in place. Whilst I tidied up, Alan headed up to the surface.

At the rebelay near the top of the shaft I searched around for some good rock in the vicinity of the natural anchor. I wanted to install one P-hanger here so that a Y-belay could be effected. At present, if the single anchor failed there would be a bad rub at the lip of the 110p. A suitable location was found and one P-hanger installed. The use of this hanger with the natural ensures that the rope hangs totally free, i.e. there is no longer a glancing rub about half way down. Also, having two anchors here gives greater security.

All up it took about 8 hours to complete the job. With bulging packs we headed back to the car and headed home....arriving back a bit too late to make it to the STC meeting!

Pitch	Rigging Details (All directions facing 'down-cave' except where specified)
Entrance Pitch-110p	110 m rope. (The entire cave can be done with a single 200 m roll of rope; we had a 'shrunk' 200 m cut into 3 pieces (180 m in total)). Anchor off the large tree; rebelay 5 m over the edge using a Y-belay from a bollard (5 m tape required) and one P-hanger. The P-hanger is about 1 m below and 1 m to the right (when on rope) of the top of the natural bollard.
Pitch 2-30p	40 m rope. Tie-back and anchor to a P-hanger at the base of the 110p (on a rock rib, 1 m above the floor), then on rope approach the pitch-head. At the lip there are two P-hangers on the left-hand wall at face-height, Y-belay from these.
Pitch 3-30p	35 m rope. Tie-back and anchor to a P-hanger on the right-hand wall at face height. Descend the right hand groove. Rebelay 5 m down from the P-hanger on the 'arete' to the right (when on rope) for a free-hang.

Baader Meinhof (IB113): 11 March 2002

By Phil Rowsell

Party: Phil Rowsell, Andras Galambos.

Back to continue digging at the stream passage and hopefully break through into Exit. I had done a lot of the donkeywork last time when down with Jeff Butt and Dave Rash. I had high expectations to break through this time (well at least to get through this part) but you never know digging. Andras was also keen to

come as he had had a go at squeezing through prior to digging, but had been too tight. Jeff Butt has also intended to come but I think the thought of lying in the stream digging put him off. "I'll come down when you break through!". No hassles, guess its "two under nourished midgets in search of a hard time"

Man were the packs pretty heavy with digging gear and rope. (I had made sure we had enough rope this time as we were a bit short previous trip). We found the way to the cave, which was the first obstacle. The rigging was pretty easy, lots of naturals, the 2nd pitch having the only bolts. We were soon at the dig site. The good news was that the stream that was flowing last time was "dry". Mega bonus as pretty cold last time. Gear off, wrecking bar at the ready and here we go again. There were a few big puddles in the stream bed this time, a consequence of digging last time but these were dispatched either by pushing them ahead or being soaked up by my fury! I was soon down at the squeeze. You had to take your helmet off as couldn't turn your head around with it on. With face half in the water, I soon started moving cobbles and mud. I had made pretty good progress, I could see a higher ceiling not far off. I had been encouraged by this last time. It only took about 10 mins before I had a go at pushing through! Yahoo Success!! I squirmed on down the passage in the mud to have a look at the next corner. Good news, it seemed to open out a bit further down. The corner would need some work, but we should get through. I shouted back to Andras the good news and I suggested he headed in behind and did a secondary clean up job. I hacked away at the cobbles again and soon pushed on through into crawling size passage and a place I could turn around, good feeling! I turned around and headed back and helped Andras clean up the 2nd corner properly.

New passage time! The crawl opened up a bit for about 10m before it came to a pitch of about 15m. Nice straws, must be 2-3m long. The only trouble was that they were at the only wide part of the pitch head. Bummer, better not break them, I would never be forgiven. I thought that with a bit of widening that I could probably squeeze through 4ft into the rift before the straws giving a free hang and good distance from the straws. We headed on back through the squeeze to get gear etc. it wasn't that bad really only one tight watery part. We grabbed the gear and headed back eager to see what we had found

The "rock" at the pitch head, turned out to be calcified river gravels etc it wasn't so super solid. Hacking away

with the pick, I managed to widen it enough to get through. There was a good thread to rig off but that was it. It would have to do I guess. I dropped on down. Man was the rock bad below, raining down. From here, another short pitch 5m lead to another 15-20m pitch initially dropping through a very tight rift. Hum, no naturals either. There was too much rub to drop straight off using the previous rope. I wished I had brought the pickaxe handle down as I could have laid that across the rift and used it as an anchor. I turned around disappointed and bumped my head. Woooopee!! a protrusion! It was pretty thin, but something. I scanned around again for ages, nothing else. I really wasn't pleased about hanging off this protrusion. Still I managed to tie back in and get something lashed up so we could continue. Now for the real fun part. I tried squeezing through the rift not a chance. The only way down was to walk out 6 ft climb down thought a wide part, then bridge back in underneath, and finally abseil down. All on this on a dodgy anchor too. Devotion! Coming back up would be interesting!! I suggested Andras that he should stay up top incase I got into trouble getting off or the anchor gave way.

With a few monkey man maneuvers I was finally at the bottom of the pitch. A quick explore showed we had dropped into a large chamber full of massive boulders. There was one definite pitch heading off down a very slippery boulder slope. I headed back. I found climbing back out at the top of the pitch wasn't the epic I thought it would be. Andras headed on down and I followed him. He had found another pitch in another area of the chamber, free drop of about 30m from stones. No more rope left, buggar. We had virtually run out of rigging gear as well. We'll have to come back another day. We headed on out feeling pretty chuffed with ourselves. I guess Jeff should have come after all! It was nice to get back though the dig squeeze and know that most of the mud was over. Andras was absolutely caked, just two white eye looking out from a brown mess. I had to take some photos. We pushed on out, taking half the cave with us stuck to the rope, gear and ourselves. I was pretty bushed on surface, but contented. The only trouble now is we have to head back down into the mud bath again to find out where it drops into Exit!!

Frankcombe Cave: Photography Therein (JF7): 16 March 2002

By Joe Farrell

Party: Steve Phipps, Joe Farrell and Grace Cumming (of Tas Uni Moles).

Joe had visited Frankcombe in 1998 and was keen to revisit to see if it was suitable for beginners trips. It was found not to be due to the amount and delicate nature of the formation. Perhaps for a second or third trip it would be OK. Grace was fired up as this was her first cave but Steve had to be persuaded somewhat to be there. He was glad he made the effort in the end.

Due to some grammatical headaches writing the previous paragraph Joe decided to abandon the 3rd

person and step into a more comfortable writing style with we's and I's. We found the cave using descriptions of its location from previous trip reports. (Ah - That's better) They can be read in Carbonate Capers 68, 69, and 104 (for MCCC members), and Speleo Spiel 307 (Mar- Apr 1998). We found the cave quite easily but remeasured some of the distances.

The entrance chamber is of pleasing proportions and well decorated with chalky 'thems. After climbing down the rock pile to the stream we tried the downstream direction. It very quickly got to a flattener (in water) which offered to make us uncomfortable for

the rest of the trip. We declined and went back to check out side passages. I was pretty convinced that downstream through the flattener was where we needed to be but soon we found formations galore in fossil passages - only slightly higher than the current streamway. Staying dry was a great plan because we spent most of the trip taking photographs. Steve and I enthusiastically tip-toed around with flashes and shot most of a role up a lengthy decorated side passage. The entrance to this passage isn't obvious but worth looking for.

Up in the back of the main chamber (which I still thought was through the watery flattener) we found the 3 - 4m straw (see front cover) which I do remember correctly as the highlight of my first trip to Frankcombe. It's possible to do the Mexican hat dance around this



The incredible Frankcombe cave ring from outer space. Photo by Joe

amazing stal so be very very careful. More Photography and a bit of a look further down the main passage brought us to our turn-around. The passage continues and is low and crawly. According to the survey it goes 400m further and according to recollection it causes much pain to kneepadless cavers.

Despite all of us being careful - I could even be guilty of being anal - we did cause a little damage. Grace broke a small stal with her Helmet and we all contributed to muddying the place up a bit more. Its obvious from the general lack of mud that the cave hasn't been visited too often. With lotsa care this cave can stay beautiful.

We were underground 5.5 hours - much more due to photography than distance travelled.

Khazad-Dum: Rig Trip – For Old Times' Sake (JF4): 24 March 2002

By Steve Bunton

Party: Stephen Bunton, Joe Farrell and Alan Jackson.

The aim of this trip was to rig KD for a number of subsequent trips, with various objectives, scheduled over the next month. It nearly didn't eventuate except for a phone call late Saturday from Joe and then it was all systems go. Jeff Butt had sorted the ropes for us before he escaped to go up Mt Anne and then away over Easter. This was an unexpected bonus and saved me a tonne of time in the night before panic.

The first test for the day was could we unlock the gate on the Junee Quarry Rd? The next was could we locate the right road? I'd been lost and bogged hopelessly here before. The would my van make it up the steep mossy road? Joe liked Forestry gates and Alan had been to Dwarrowdelf recently and the van made it OK. We did a quick gear sort keeping the ropes in the correct order and then were off.

It only took my old bones the regulation 40 minutes to get to KD, so I was happy with that. We were underground by 10am. The Serpentine didn't seem anywhere near as nasty after a few Niggly trips moderately recently. I'd heard there were bolt farms starting to spring up throughout the cave and I resisted

the temptation to rig off the spits because I wanted to replace them eventually with P-hangers so we did it the tried and tested good old fashioned way rigging off the eyebolts. These to will be replaced in due course. We even used rope protectors as appropriate, just for old time sake, although I did notice that Petzl now feature them in their catalogue!!! Standards must be slipping, even in France!

Improvements to the cave are a few well placed spits for rebelays and a lovely Y-hang on the 70-footer, which was a bitch of a thing in the past! Our trip to the bottom was basically uneventful although my aerial antics on the third bottom streamway pitch weren't repeated until Joe pulled up the rope on the way out.

I didn't bomb the last pitch but certainly Joe and Alan were keen to. Joe rarely had got to the bottom of a cave on a single push trip and was therefore ecstatic at bottoming KD. On the way out we lifted the ropes up the streamway pitches and took out some rebelays but basically left it rigged. We abseiled the Scaling Pole Pitch, leaving it rigged and were back on the surface in eight hours. It was only the second time I'd got out of the cave in daylight. The other time was the last time I did the cave, solo, fourteen years ago almost to the day.

Khazad-Dum: Photo Trip - A Special Caving Birthday (JF4): 1 April 2002

By Steve Bunton

Party: Stephen Bunton, Rolan and Stefan Eberhard, and David Noble (Blue Mountains Speleos).

One of the reasons why KD was left rigged was for a photo trip. Stefan Eberhard was back home in Tassy, on holidays from his job at Caveworks in WA. The trip

was planned at a BBQ at Rolan's the day before, where there was a gathering of old TCC faces with a combined age of 237 and nearly 150 years of caving experience between them. Getting good photos of wet caves is difficult and I'm more than willing to cooperate with anyone who is keen and I'd do my utmost to facilitate the undertaking. I'd also received an email from David asking if there was any caving happening over the Easter break and could he come along. His credentials were pretty good having done Ice Tube, Niggly, Cauldron and KD on a previous visit to attend Tascon. Better than mine over recent years.

With the cave rigged we bombed down to the Brew Room in no time where Rolan remarked "There's nothing to this cave really!". The revised depth seems much more plausible. He had logged the altitude of the entrance on his digital altimeter and once at the sump checked it again at -271m. On the way out he got a reading on the tag at +11m making the depth somewhere between 271 and 282m.

The trip to the bottom was punctuated only with Stefan pausing to scope out a few spots and ideas for photos. For me it was a bit more of a trial since my main light got cave shy at the entrance and I was running on my spare. This time I did descend the bottom pitch to see how it could be re-rigged and toddled off towards the Sump. I became the subject for photos on the bottom pitch and then as I sat in the Brew Room I cast my mind back to my first KD trip during Easter 1977 and the trials I had experienced then with lighting. It then dawned on me this was the 25th Anniversary of my Caving in Tasmania. To celebrate I blew a bulb in my spare light!

Stefan's photo sessions seemed to go AOK and we can only hope there's some good ones in the can. He didn't drop anything or drown anything like I often do, so that was a relief. It was handy having four people for multiple flash work. Apart from that it was a good trip marred only by the fact that I felt like I was scurrying through the cave in an attempt to get maximum distance on the batteries in my spare light and that I felt I was always bent over to see the floor because I was always on low beam on my spare light.

When we arrived at the entrance where I had dumped the main light it was sitting there inexplicably glowing dimly on low beam. Needless to say that when I got home firstly I discovered that Petzl Duos have spare bulbs in the headpiece but not only that, the main bulb was working fine anyway. Just cave shy, I guess!

We were out in under six hours and as we began our trudge through the forest in fading daylight. Rolan remarked "I'm missing daylight saving already". I was slightly jet lagged from the day before. This was because the BBQ was scheduled to start at 1pm and with some of us forgetting about daylight saving, our children not sleeping in, and then not getting lunch effectively till 2pm, it was a bad day for bio-rhythms. I didn't know what I felt like when we arrived back at the car until Stefan produced a beer as a reward for the photographers helpers. How did he know it was exactly what I needed at the time? Just the thing to celebrate a quarter of a century's association with one of Australia's best caves. In case you were wondering there were only five old TCC bods at the BBQ.

Mystery Creek (IB10): 2 April 2002

By Phil Rowsell

Party: Phil Rowsell, Kathryn Harris

After many complaints that I hadn't taken her caving, and the threat (final subtle hint I think) of going caving with someone else, I took Kathryn on her first caving trip to Mystery Creek. Headed into the far side of Matchbox Squeeze. A pretty leisurely trip without much drama, bar the "crack of Death" (the rift just

before Matchbox Squeeze). Here, Kathryn had a few initial palpitations, but they were soon over come to reap the reward of the amazing resonance of the last pitch of Midnight hole. With Kathryn being a singer, it was well appreciated. Headed on back out to look at glow worms etc. She thoroughly enjoyed the trip which was great. Pull through trip next time.

Big Tree Pot (IB9): 6 April 2002

By Phil Rowsell

Party: Phil Rowsell, Alan Jackson, Geof Wise

Time for a weekends caving down at Ida Bay. I wanted to drop Big Tree Pot and Milk Run. Thankfully the club just had enough rope left in the store to the caves, but left the store virtually bare. We arrived with no dramas (which is good considering we drove down in my car!) and flogged up the usual track. Each of us seemed to be carrying fairly heavy packs, but we made good progress. It seemed to take an age to gear up, but eventually I started to rig the cave.

By :Phil Rowsell

There were lots of good natural anchors that made rigging pretty easy. After the initial squeeze into the first pitch, you were rewarded with a nice free hanging abseiling down water worn tube. The cave had a really good feel about it. The 2nd pitch rigged again of naturals, was not free hanging but the 3rd (following directly after), we were back to great free hanging tubes again. I was surprised to see a spit present for this pitch, with plenty of naturals again for back ups. The 4th pitch again had a single spit with natural back ups. A

short rift clamber led to the 5th (only 6m). I was really surprised to see 2 spits hear to enable a 'Y' hang. It seemed funny as lots of good naturals you could rig off. I used the natural in the end as we only had one bolt left, and I assumed that there would be a spit or two for the big drop.

The big pitch (90m) was a real gem. A good back up to a giant stall, with a 'Y' hang from a spit and a broken off stall, giving a great free hang for the entire pitch. I headed on down amazed at the resonance in the chamber. I had previously thought that Midnight hole was amazing, but this was incredible. I think I drove Geof and Alan crazy with my continual singing!! At the bottom, a big block allowed a re-belay to drop the last 9m pitch. We had a good look around the bottom and followed the stream (which was very dry) to its

termination in a gravel choke. There seemed to be a faint draft, but not very strong. Still I wish I had bought my digging gear down. I recon that this site is worth a poke. I was also encouraged by the large silt banks further back that had been cut through, indicating that it had once been sumped, but was flowing again.

With no more passage left to explore, we headed on out. I felt good heading up the 90m. I guess I have done so much recently that I am fairly jamming fit. Geof and Alan had no dramas either, and we continued on systematically de-rigged the cave. We were back on surface 5.5 hours later, with a good buzz from a really good trip. A great little cave, easy rigging with lots of naturals, nice free hanging pitches and the 90m a real gem (check out the resonance!). I will have to go back to have a dig at the choke some day.

Milk Run (IB38): 7 April 2002

By Phil Rowsell

Party: Phil Rowsell, Alan Jackson, Geof Wise

A great feeling walking in with no gear, we bombed along the track. We were soon reunited with our manky caving gear back at Big Tree Pot. I remembered then how heavy everything was as we moved site and tried to find Milk Run. The walk out wouldn't be so pleasant!! We spent awhile trying to find the entrance. Track description didn't match reality. Still we found IB49 so knew we were near. We eventually stumbled on it and re taped the track.

The same sort of small entrance to a nice nearly free hanging pitch as Big Tree Pot, Deja Vous!! The rotten log had gone, but I found a good chock placement and used a tree route. (Lots of other possibilities too). I was soon at the bottom looking at the series of short pitches. These were not so nice as there was a reasonable slope between them, lots of loose cobbles as ammunition and no where to get out of the firing line! Rigging these was not quite so easy, as there were not so many naturals anchors. I found a good anchor on the first, a homemade hanger for the 2nd (remember a small round karabiner for this), but the 3rd pretty bare. I eventually managed to get a hex 6 in a crack after some excavation. All of these pitches had rubs so protectors needed, the 3rd was especially bad. Bit of a straddle out across the rift followed to gain access the stainless bolt

on the 4th (26m) pitch. The position of the bolt was not the best as I had to drop a tape for a re-belay from the bolt too, to prevent rub. Geof wasn't having the best of days and after the traverse out to the pitch head, decided to call it quits once at the bottom of the pitch. It was a bit of a downer, but he was quite happy to sit about and wait for us to continue on.

Great pitch the 5th pitch 49m, a big wash tube. Again, a traverse out to a bolt on, but not quite as airy the previous pitch. Alan and I were a bit concerned a bit about leaving Geof up top, but after checking again he said he was fine, so went off and explored. We dropped down to 'The Way' by the 'B' route 8m pitch (I think you need the "handline") and 30m pitch off the manky looking Dyna bolt. We had a look around the bottom and I pushed the squeeze through the stream passage to the gravel choked. It didnt seem to drafting at all. I wasn't impressed as much with this dig site as the one in Big Tree Pot. There was not much else to see down here so we headed on out.

Not a bad trip but the cave was not as nice as it had been made out to be. OK rigging, but good naturals hard to find in places. Bolts were bomber, but only one (when present) for each pitch. Still a cave well worth doing. All in all, we had two good days caving.

Clarification to Speleo Spiel 329: Karst Management at Mole Creek and Mt Field

Rolan Eberhard

Statements by Arthur Clarke on karst management at Mole Creek and Mt Field, in his article 'Conservation Report to ASF – Tasmania' in *Speleo Spiel* 329, warrant clarification.

1. Cave conservation issues at Mole Creek

Arthur is incorrect in stating that 'Rolan Eberhard is now employed by the Resource and Conservation section of the DPIWE working full time on a rewrite of the Mole Creek DMP [Mole Creek Karst National Park draft management plan] in conjunction with other work'. I am employed in the Nature Conservation Branch of DPIWE's Resource Management & Conservation Division, on the development of a karst strategy for Mole Creek. The karst strategy seeks to promote greater consistency in management of karstlands at Mole

Creek, taking account of the highly fragmented tenure arrangements that Arthur alludes to. It is envisaged that the strategy will complement the Mole Creek Karst National Park plan, but it is important to recognise that these are separate initiatives.

Preparation of management plans for Crown reserves, including those at Mole Creek, is the responsibility of the Planning & Visitor Services Branch of Parks and Wildlife Service, a separate division within DPIWE. Myself and others at Nature Conservation Branch contribute to management plans; however, PWS coordinates and has final say on the content of draft management plans submitted to the Minister, who can approve their release for public comment. Under a new process, the Resource Planning & Development Commission reviews public submissions on draft plans and makes recommendations to the Minister on the issues raised. This can lead to changes to the plan. Revisions to the Mole Creek plan as a result of the public submissions will not commence until the RPDC process, which will include public hearings scheduled for June, has been completed.

2. Government acquisition of karst land

As Arthur reports, the State has purchased land that contains caves at Mole Creek and Montagu. As many cavers will be aware, access to some caves on private land at Mole Creek has been a contentious issue. Several major caves on private land are no longer open to cavers. It is important that we don't exacerbate this problem by misunderstanding the access situation with respect to the recent acquisitions.

Other karst acquisitions at Mole Creek are possible but these are matters for discussions between the owners and the State, best not publicly discussed until negotiations are completed. The situation will be helped if cavers could be particularly careful in their interactions with private cave owners while these negotiations are underway.

Two parcels of land have been purchased:

Herberts Pot Area

This is the 'Conservation Area' in the *Draft Mole Creek Karst National Park and Conservation Area Management Plan 2001*. The land is contiguous with the Westmorland Falls block of the National Park, as shown on Map 1 of the management plan. It contains much of Herberts Pot, but does not contain the only known entrance to this cave, which lies on adjacent private land.

The existence of the new Conservation Area does not imply that the public can legally access Herberts Pot. The owners of the private land that contains the cave entrance do not allow cavers access to Herberts Pot or other caves on their land. Moreover, the draft plan states that those parts of Herberts Pot that fall within the reserve are a restricted access cave for which no permits will be issued at the present time.

Cavers should also be aware of the situation regarding access to the Westmorland Falls block of the National Park. The initial section of track to Westmorland Falls crosses private land and is not a legal access to the National Park. Attempts are underway to resolve this situation and cavers will be advised if things change.

Mersey Hill Cave

This parcel was purchased by the State in 2001 and is not shown as a reserve on currently available maps. The legal access to the land, which is bounded by private land on three sides, is not obvious. Cavers wishing to visit Mersey Hill Cave are advised to contact me (ph 03 6233 6455) or Ian Houshold (ph 03 6233 3868), at Earth Science Section, DPIWE, or Dick Dwyer, Senior Ranger at Mole Creek (ph 03 6363 5182).

3. Draft Management Plan for Mount Field

Arthur states that forestry roads extending into the park from the Florentine Valley are 'all currently maintained by speleo groups to provide access to the Junee-Florentine caves and karst'. Of the six or so roads that extend into the park from the west, only two – Nine Road and Chrisps Road – are used by cavers. I point this out because it seems to me that cavers should have no objection to rehabilitating roads they don't use.

**If you've got something to flog then don't forget the Spiel might help you shift it.
It cost's members nothing so have a go.**

Niagara Pot (JF29): 12 April 2002

By Phil Rowsell

Party: Phil Rowsell, Alan Jackson, Geof Wise

Jeff Butt had been talking about having a campaign to re survey Niagara due to its close proximity to 341 and possible connection potential. Jeff was tied up so decided to have a tourist trip down to check the place out. It had been dry for ages so we shouldn't get too wet. It was nice to go to somewhere with only a few short pitches and the tackle sacks not brimming with rope. We followed the new track over which was easy going and very well taped so we had no problems finding the cave.

The water was pretty low so we didn't get too wet on the first pitch. Progressively we worked our way down the pitches. It was pretty easy rigging, but I definitely didn't want to be here in flood, or worst still while it was flooding!! I didn't get a real buzz from this cave, but soldiered on. Finally we got to the last series of pitches. I dropped the two 6m pitches (bad rub potential on the first) and found our 22m + 6m rope wouldn't make it with rigging to the bottom. Nightmare, not another trip not bottoming a cave!! Luckily, we had brought down a 17 for the climb down further up, so Alan headed back up and grabbed it, while I re-rigged the pitch. Loads of rope. The knot was 7m off the deck which was annoying. Oh for when the store is full again with rope!!

Soon everyone was down, and enjoying a quick lunch break. Time for exploring. I had an idea that we had to climb up somewhere, so we spent a while climbing up

where water was dripping into the main chamber. We found a few small dead end passages but obviously not the main route. I found a climb down into a large rift chamber and we followed this on for some way, eventually finding survey cairn 32 close to a squeeze. Once through the squeeze, we came to another pitch head. Buggar, no more rope! This wasn't described anywhere either. I guessed that this must be the extension that I had read about in a trip report. Alan found another little rift over the top of the pitch, which headed to another pitch (going to the same place). This had seen traffic, so I guess this was the way on. Not today though, it will have to be yet another place to re visit.

I was sure there was more to the cave as remember a climb up from the survey. We spent a while checking out where the main stream sank through the boulders but no big passage as I was expecting. We decided to knock it on the head as it was getting late and head out. We were soon back on the surface. A nice trip, fairly easy, no big pitches, but you really didn't get inspired until you got to the bottom and had a good root around.

I had a look at the survey when we got back to see what else was around. We had indeed found the extension and we had also missed the main passage headed off near the waterfall. From later discussions, Jeff had started up this passage but came back thinking it wasn't the route as Alan and I had disappeared into the big rift chamber underneath. Have to check it out next time.

Mini Martin (IB8): 13 April 2002

By Joe Farrell

Party: Ric Tunney, Janine McKinnon, Steve Phipps and Joe Farrell.

The four of us were walking up around Bender's Quarry at 1040 - a good early starting time following a two hour drive. It took about 1 and quarter hours to walk to the cave. Turn right at 30 minute creek (30 min. walk from the top of the quarry) and follow the pink tapes passing Big Tree Pot (IB9) on your right further up the hill. There was a lot of gear to lug including the 109m of 10mm rope for the first pitch and the 70m of 11mm for the second two pitches.

At the entrance I looked down the hole to get my adrenalin started. Of course you can't see the bottom of a 100m pitch but it got me excited. You could tell it was F'ing deep by the shape of the shaft. Ric trogged up first (complaining at length about his suit having shrunk) and did the honours while we remaining sat around and read the paper. Eventually we heard the distant whistle (agreed signal for "off rope"), and I was on my way down. Once I was past the "no loop" rebelay 5m down I had a look below and saw Ric's light. I think it must have been the cave blaster because

it didn't really look THAT far. Going down wasn't spooky at all, just really really deceiving. I thought I was half way down and called to the others on the surface "I'm half way already!". They shouted back "OK" and I kept abseiling. Boy was I wrong. 15 minutes later I was just getting into the dark zone, my legs had gone completely to sleep, and Ric's light didn't look any closer at all. I was abseiling very slowly with a bare hand on my Stop to gauge heat build-up. When it got nearly too hot to touch I would pause and let it cool down before continuing. The others came down comparatively fast. It was a bouncy Eldrid rope and Steve was doing a great human yo-yo impression when he got to the bottom. He didn't enjoy the descent and felt out of control.

Ric couldn't find the anchors for the next pitch. They were brand spanking P hangers (see article on page 2 in this Spiel). When Janine arrived she pointed her light straight at them without even searching! Ric prussiked back up to them and rigged the next 30m pitch. The 30m felt tiny after the 100m, as did the third and final 30m pitch into Exit cave.

On this final pitch Ric rigged the mother of all rebelay loops! Comments of "Oh my God, its soooo big" reverberated down the shaft. Janine started swearing on her change-over - I never thought I'd hear her complaining about a loop that was too BIG!! She had to use her foot loop to rescue the situation. This final pitch was as spectacular as the first. Viewed by cave blaster from Exit Cave it was a perfect cross section of the cylindrical shaft with cavers dangling inside it.

Once at the bottom we discussed options for our return. The original plan was that two people would prussik back up and derig while two people would walk out Exit cave. Three good reasons for 3 people not to prussik back up were cited. They included a damaged shoulder, lack of fitness, and lack of confidence. I was the only one without a good reason so I went up by myself. (There is a view that I *did* have a good reason by default - see Dear Dorothy in Spiel 329, and its solution in the next Spiel)

Before splitting up we walked down to the stream and did some drinking, piddling, sightseeing with the cave blaster, and clothes swapping. Ric and Janine had us in hysterics when they realised they were wearing each others trog suits. They looked very tweedledum and

tweedledee. No wonder Ric thought his suit had shrunk in the wash.

The others sat at the bottom of the last pitch while I ascended the bottom two by myself (still in voice contact) and derigged. When I started pulling up the rope it was their signal to head on out. I carefully tied all the rope together then started up the big pitch. Bouncing was unavoidable and I was sheet scared for most of the way. Happily, there was some psychological relief when I got into the daylight zone, but that didn't mean anything about the distance left to prussik.

I hauled myself over the edge after 32 minutes of prussiking and sat in the evening light and listened to a nearby lyrebird yodelling. When I returned to normal I started pulling up 180m of rope. By the time I'd coiled and packed it all and removed my fury suit I could hear Ric, Janine and Steve coming up the hill. We started the long trudge back to the cars in the dark. We had woodfired pizza in Dover on the way home.

I was underground roughly 5.5 hours and they were underground roughly 6.5 hours from the start of Ric's descent.

A New Cave in the Ice Tube Area? (JF??): 14 April 2002

By Alan Jackson & Phil Rowsell

A new day dawned, although Mad Phil seemed blissfully unaware of it, as I dragged him out of bed and urged him to get ready. The plan was to get as far as we could be bothered down Ice Tube in the hope of doing a through trip in the not too distant future.

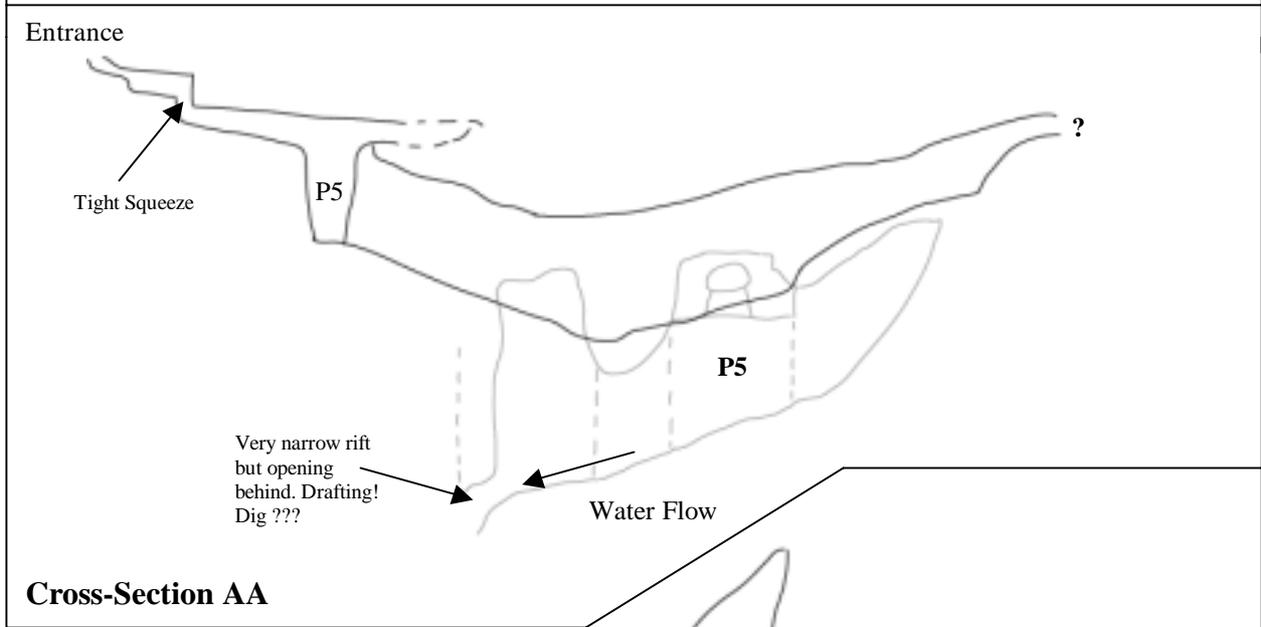
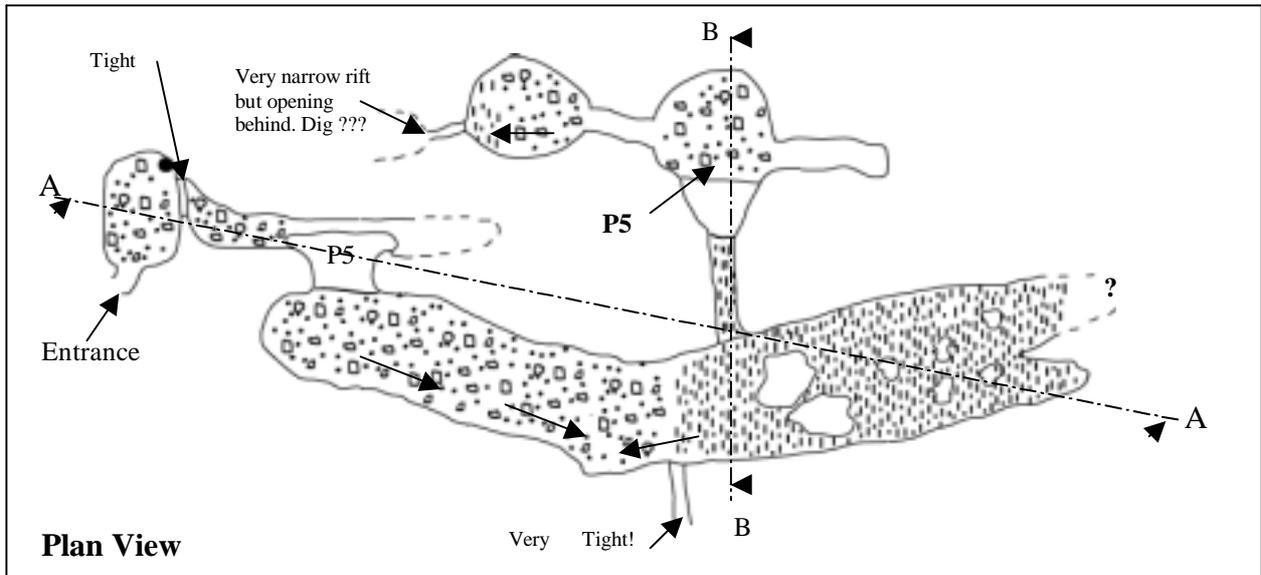
At the Eight Rd car park we progressively scaled down our intentions in an effort to reduce the amount of rope we would have to carry. Conscious of how difficult it is to follow tracks at night after our recent Niagara Pot trip we spent a while re-routing around tree falls and adding more tapes to the track, and it was during this process that Phil stumbled across a mildly insignificant hole in the ground. Phil became steadily more excited as he realised that the hole was too small to get into, but was diggable. "Could this really be a new cave?!" we asked ourselves.

A few rocks were shifted and Phil excitedly proclaimed the presence of a pitch. Ten minutes later we were trogged up and ready for action. Just inside the tight entrance window a loose slope gave way to a 6-7m narrow rift pitch. A hand line to a chock stone in the ceiling got us out to a couple of naturals for a free hang, at the base of which the rift widened to about 3-4m and went down a sloping mud heap to a mud choked bottom. A steeper mud slope rose on the other side of the bottom terminating in a nasty tangle of precarious boulders. Spirits dropped considerably until Phil noticed the small tunnel heading off to the side. We tied back to a boulder embedded in mud and slipped in to the tube. 3-4m on the tube dropped into a promising looking pot, washed beautifully clean (in stark contrast

to the squalid muddy crap in the rest). Two very small and dodgy naturals got us down the 4m to the base of the pot. Here a full skeleton of either a Bennetts wallaby or pademelon lay, who had obviously also found our cave, but without the benefits of ropes and descenders. We had intersected another parallel rift, which unfortunately terminated after 5m either side of our entrance point. The 'downstream' end could possibly provide a dig site (one digger had already been there, the lower jawbone of a common wombat!) as it looks like a reasonable volume of water once sculpted this cave until Ice Tube possibly stole its water further up the dry gully, and it has since filled with mud and dead animals. The rift did continue, but far too narrowly and appeared to maybe open up further along (anorexia appears our only option for this one). Ascending disappointingly Phil de-gearred and checked another tube/tunnel opposite the previously explored one, which could possibly join wherever the first muddy bottom comes out (this is also a job for anorexics). We headed out and resigned ourselves to having kissed another toad.

Once out we trekked about hoping for another entrance to mysteriously appear which would bypass the chokes. That didn't eventuate, however we did discover that we came within 50m of achieving our initial goal of finding Ice Tube! So close, yet so far in more than one respect. We'll get back soon and survey what is there and maybe have a prod with a shovel at what might be there. [That survey complete with new number and name is on the next page! - Ed]

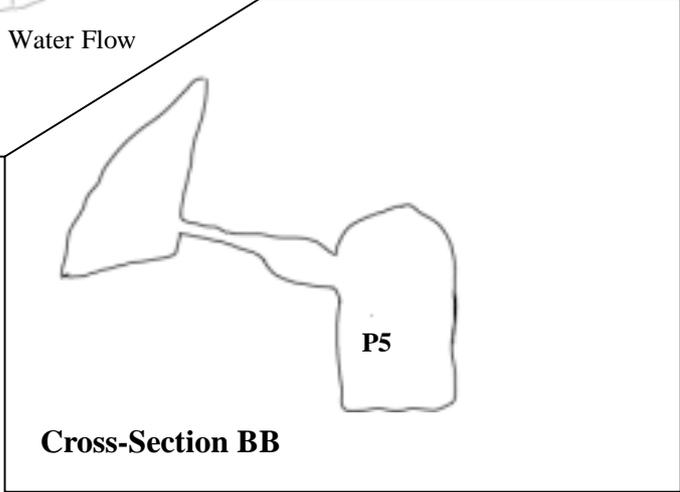
JF-265 Diversion Pot



Approx. Scale 0 2 4 Metres

Memory Sketch Map
by Phil Rowsell

STC Map No



Khazad Dum: P-hanging Part 1 (JF4): 16 April 2002
By Jeff Butt

Party: Phil Rowsell, Jeff Butt, Damian Bidgood, Hans Benisch

Steve Bunton had recently rigged K.D. for a couple of sets of visitors, so I thought we'd take advantage of this and whip down to install some P-hangers.

For today's trip, our cast of participants increased to four, which made for easy carrying of the gear. With plenty of caver-power, we decided that we'd start at the bottom of the cave and work towards the surface. This would mean that future trips will be easier as we won't have to carry the gear as far, nor rig the whole cave.

Anyway as we headed in we eye-balled potential sites for bolts and discussed the various options. There was a bit of discussion about whether or not P-hangers should be placed if adequate naturals exist. I personally feel that NO is the answer here, believing that we shouldn't take all the challenges out of rigging this sporty cave. I think that we should only replace ageing/defunct bolts (i.e. the existing spits and loxins). But, some of the others had different ideas, believing that if P's are to be installed, then we should put lots of them in to make rigging easy and safe. Clearly there are some differences in opinion; STC as a group needs to sort out some guidelines here!

Fortunately placements for the bottom two pitches weren't contentious; so after discussing the best options we set to work on them as a two teams of two. Phil and Damian began drilling the holes on the second last pitch (two holes on the right hand wall, at head height, one an easy reach the other about 1.2 m out). Meanwhile Hans and I went and rigged the last pitch (which had been stripped) and sorted out what we were going to do here (one bolt near the spit rebelay about 12 m down, a second bolt about 1 m down from the ledge on the outside of the 'Waiting Room').

The first battery pack died before Phil and Damian had completed their second hole, which was a bit of a surprise as this battery pack normally lasts for 3 holes. Anyway we ferried the drill down and with a new battery pack, Hans just managed to drill the two holes

on the last pitch just as this battery pack died. The very hard rock in this area seems to consume a lot more battery power. Whilst I made a start on gluing in the P-hangers on the last pitch, the holes were completed on the pitch above using the 'big berth' battery pack. Since we couldn't use the new P-hangers for 24 hours and also owing to the lack of a reliable spit remover we didn't attempt to remove the spits (one on each pitch); this will be done another time.

The gluing installations went quite smoothly, the only casualty was one dropped icy-pole stick. We also removed the old eyebolt on the second last pitch and rehabilitated the Loxin hole with glue and camouflaged this with drill dust. By the time we packed up, we had been in the cave for 7 hours and decided it was time to head home. As a rule of thumb, it seems to allow an hour per installed P-hanger; today's trip was more like 2 hours per hanger as we were doing the most distant ones.

Incidentally, the next pitch out (i.e. third last pitch) is well endowed with good natural anchors, and so is fine. Ideas for fourth, fifth and sixth last pitches differ, so we need to discuss options for these more widely before acting here.

As we exited the cave we pulled up ropes on the streamway pitches to prevent possible flood damage. Nine hours after heading in we were out with all our gear. It did take a bit longer than expected, but you get that! Part 2 will happen sometime soon; but first there needs to be some discussion, as alluded to above. Also, our supply of P-hangers is almost out, and these are currently proving problematic to source at a reasonable price; the price has almost doubled over the last two years, from \$15 to \$27 each!

Ice Tube (JF345): 17 April 2002

By Phil Rowsell

Party: Phil Rowsell, Alan Jackson

I had been wanted to drop Ice Tube ever since coming to Tassie. I had dug into a new cave (Diversion Pot) on our previous attempt near Ice Tube that diverted us. This time, I was locked on the mission. I headed up with Alan, the two of us with over 400m of mainly 11m rope, all the rigging gear we possessed. We could hardly pick the rucksacks of the floor. Once you were walking it wasn't too bad. We slogged our way up the path. Thankfully we knew the way now and we had down some track work, so we weren't staggering all over the show trying to find the track. (Still needs a good saw, which we will do next time). Finally we got the entrance, I was bushed before we had even started!

With two tackle sacks each, plus loose rope for the first two pitches (wouldn't fit in the sacks!), we staggered into the cave. A nice cobble stream way heading down was easy going with the weight. Thankfully the steam wasn't flowing hard. We found the hand line for the

first pitch out to the bolts and I thought this is going to be an "easy" trip as I was surprised that there was a hand line for this. May be it would not be the epic we had heard about. The pitch was nice, two OK bolts (one good stainless ring hanger) giving a good anchor down to a good re-belay (need a trace well sharp) on a sharp needle which allowed you to drop down a wall the opposite side from the water.

The 2nd pitch almost followed directly. It was a bit of an airy traverse out to two manky bolts or what!! This was a bit more like what I had expected. The bolts were tied together with a tape and a rotting karabiner left there. I really didn't want to drop the pitch on these bolts Thankfully I found a good protrusion to re-belay off with a trace that restored the warm fuzzy (spooked) feeling! I tried to find a deviation to keep out of the water towards the bottom of the pitch, but I got tired of swinging across, grabbing the wall, pieces coming off in your hand and then swinging back right under the

waterfall. I came to the conclusion that I was getting more wet doing this than just heading on down!! I dumped bags and went off to have a look at the Placebo effect while Alan came on down. Hum didn't like the look of this, an exposed traverse over a 20m drop. Still I pushed on and then it got muddy, great! I came back to see if I had missed something, no such luck. I headed back again with Alan and pushed on a bit further. We got to the end of the rift and we could see a slippery mud climb down, but it still didn't look good. I was glad when Alan piked at it too. I shuffled on a bit further, but really didn't like the look of it. I guess if we had had someone who had been through before, it may have been different but I didn't like the option of slipping down the cimb and falling down a 20m pitch. We headed back along the rift disappointed.

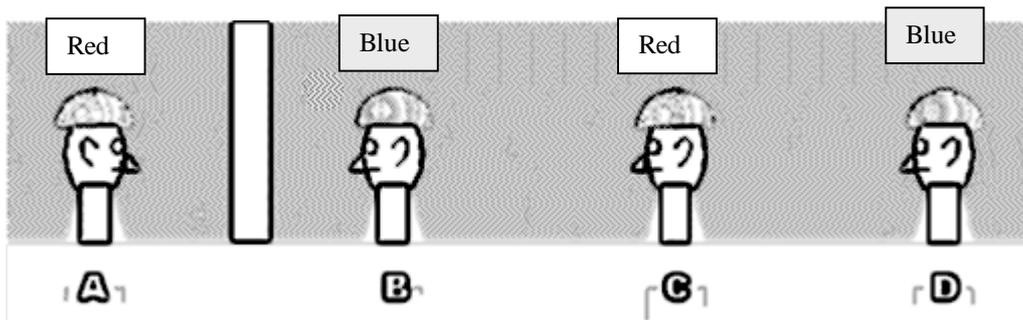
We spent the next hour or so looking for naturals to drop the waterfall. I got down the first part, but there were no more anchors to re-belay over the edge and keep out of the water. We started to loosing interest. I must have traverse the rift 10 times. Finally with both

of us not keen to push it we headed back out frustrated, displeased at our abysmal performance! Man was it hard work getting the gear out. Heading up the cobbled stream way to the entrance was exhausting. Finally at the entrance, we dump the gear blitzed, with thoughts focusing on the walk out. If we had got further down the cave, we would have been really stuffed. We packed rucksacks, and headed out. The walk out was OK once you were moving, but I got back to the car feeling as though I had been through the mill.

An interesting trip. We were really disappointed about not getting further, but we didn't want to take any risks, especially with only two of us. It also didn't help having so much 11mm rope. Hopefully there will be some more 10mm back in the store for next time!! I guess one or two more people wouldn't go a miss, it was pretty ambitious with just the two of us. I will head back next time and re-bolt the 2nd pitch and possibly stick a bolt in to protect the placebo effect, continuing the bolting project John Hawkins-Salt started.

The Helmet Puzzle

(adapted from the DUSA songpage - <http://www.dur.ac.uk/~dds8sa/songs.html>)



The four cavers shown above were set up and caught caving at Wet Cave without permission. The land owner buried them up to their necks in the mud. They can not move and so can only see forward. Between A and B is a brick wall which can not be seen through. They know that between them are 4 helmets, 2 x red and 2 x blue, but they do not know which colour they are wearing.

One of them must call out to the land owner the colour of their helmet. If they get it wrong, They will be verbally abused and the authorities will be called out. They are not allowed to talk to each other and have 10 minutes to fathom it out.

After a few minutes one of them shouts out the colour of his helmet.

- Who is it?
- Why is he 100% certain of the colour of his helmet?

This is not a trick question, and it is possible to work out the answer!

[Well, that's what it says anyway... The answer isn't on the website. If no one can work it out we'll have to email away for it! Lemme know if you solve it – Joe]

STC has Caving lamps and helmets available for hire to schools, scouts and other groups with responsible Caving leaders. Contact the Equipment Officer for details.

Khazad-Dum (JF4): 20 April 2002

By Steve Bunton

Party: Stephen Bunton, Ingegard Ask (Swedish visitor)

Inge contacted me by email to see if anyone could take her caving whilst she was in Hobart attending a conference on pollutants of frozen groundwater. She said she'd bring her own SRT gear. On the strength of this, I thought, anyone who is keen enough to bring SRT gear halfway around the world with them should

be up to doing a decent cave. KD was the obvious choice. This also gave us a chance to christen the new p-hangers on the bottom pitches. All in all it was an event free 7 hour round trip. The new bolts work well and we pulled out a couple of ropes for use in Ice Tube so the deriggers will have to take them back in a few weeks but so be it!

Baader Meinhof (2) (IB113): 21 April 2002

By Phil Rowsell

Party: Phil Rowsell, Andras Galambos, Alan Jackson

Back a third time to hopefully push Baader Meinhof to its conclusion and find the connection into Exit Cave. It had been over a month since I had been down with Andras and dug through into new passage. We had found a large chamber with two leads, both ending in pitches.

We had intended that there would be a few more of us but several people bailed leaving just 3 of us. A good number, but left us more kit to carry each. I recon I could walk the Exit track blind folded now I have been down it so many times recently. It took us about an hour to get to Mini Martin, and there we left the good track behind us. We did the best we could with minimal tape we had to make the track so we could get out. There wasn't that many markers so I expected an epic on the way out. This track is another that could do with a good saw. Jeff Butt had done a great job up to Mini Martin, but needs a bash beyond.

The rigging for the cave was pretty familiar now. I did manage to find a good deviation on the 2nd pitch which was pleasing, and now sorted the rope lengths etc so weren't carrying too much excess gear. I felt sorry for both Andras and Alan, Alan had the pig (110m rope bag) and Andras was battling away with two sacks. (It was easy money doing the rigging!). We soon got down to the dig site, where fun starts. Gear off and I headed back to the squalid squeeze. I headed in first, taking two of the sacks with me. English caving bread and butter this stuff. It seemed much more muddy since we had dug it through and glad when I was on the other side.

I donned my gear again and rigged the next pitch while the others were coming through the squeeze. I dropped on down to the head of the next pitch. The rigging on this pitch had been a bit wild last time so I had brought the bolt kit down this time. I put two spits in forming a good 'Y' hang allowing you to drop down through the rift easily. This was a great improvement on the rather gymnastic traverse out, climb down, then back again, before abseiling down. Finally I was back in the big

chamber we had found last time. It had taken 4 hours to get here with bolting. I waited for the rest to show up and we headed over to one of the leads we found last time.

We choose the lead with the bigger drop, as we hoping it would be a quicker route into Exit. We had the 110m for this. There were some good naturals to start, which allowed me to go down and have a look at the pitch head. It was slippery as! There was a pitch of about 30m, with a bit of a lip a short way down, then free hang. It would needed to bolt again. I spent awhile selecting a site, and found by heading out further I could get a free hang. Nightmare, the wall was 1" thick with mud. Thankfully after cleaning it off found good rock behind. I started bolting again. The others went off to have look at the other lead. I only put in one bolt as I had two good back ups and it only needed to be a re-belay. It didn't take long to rig and soon dragged the other back as we were ready to drop this one. A nice pitch free hanging, but down a face of really chossy stuff which rained down.

At the bottom, the cave continued along a large rift with a number of small drops. There was no where to hide, so I rigged several of the little pitches to get some distance away. We dropped about four 3-5m pitched before the rift turned a sharp right. Nightmare, it looked like it just pinched out!! Buggar!! I headed down just to check and I was delighted to see a hole on the left wall with another big pitch. A big echo, and from stones I reckoned it about 40m. I decided to stopped and ate as was starving. We has been down 6 hours already. Hopefully this would get us down to exit, as we were all getting pretty tired.

There was a good back up and a dodgy choke stone as back up and here we go again! This was not such a nice pitch to rig. A 10m slope off to a vertical drop, with no naturals. It was a big cylindrical tube, and I couldn't remember any think like this in Exit. Still I don't really know it that well so didn't worry. Hopefully it will drop out somewhere we knew. Not wanted to be defeated, I spent ages trying to find a re-belay anchor. There were too many rub points above to rope protect. The same story, touch or kick the side and bombs away. Eventually I found a small flake that I could get a tape

over, but it did not locked on very well. I found that I could fit a chock in, behind the flake, and that would hopefully stop the tape slipping off. Bargain she's a goer! Just as well as I had more rigging gear of any description left!! With complaints above that people were getting cold, I said I was nearly finished. It needed a rope protector over the edge to protect the re-belay tape, but it was nice rig. I headed on down. Nightmare, not enough rope!! I had left the 30m at the top of the pitch. I was about 4m short. There seemed to be a bit of a ledge I could possibly get off on. I pushed on down and found I could just get off. I tied my back in so I didn't loose the rope. Thankfully Alan was still game to come on down so he brought more rope on down.

I found I could climb down easily, and looked in dismay. No passage bar a really small hole taking the stream (when flowing!). I tried fitting through but too small. Dig again, no draft either, not good. I frantically pulled out cobbles using hand and other boulders to bash them loose, and I finally had a hole I could

squeeze down through. Kicking around inside didn't feel too good. Alan was down now, so I came out and got him to hold my legs while I had a look head first. Bummer, It choked out in sand and gravel. Nightmare, after all this effort too. Diggable, but I would like to see how far we are from know Exit passage before digging this. It can't be far!! On the grim news Andras decided not to bother headed on down. We decided to leave the cave rigged so we could head in again and survey it in a day or two. We headed on out pretty disappointed. Still we had the other lead that must take the draft and hopefully the illusive connection.

It was really nice heading out with minimal gear finally back on surface some 10.5 hours later. A tiring trip. The walk out proved to be a doodle too which was good as none of us were really in the mood for a route finding nightmare. Rocked back to Hobart at 02:30. A long day, we found new passage but no connection. Next time, this is getting familiar!!

A Testimony to the life of Prof. Sam Carey - founder of organised caving in Australia

Arthur Clarke

Around 11am on Sunday June 16th, when members of Southern Tasmanian Caverneers (STC) were preparing to descend *Wolf Hole* at Hastings, a morning tea gathering commenced in the Geology Department at the University of Tasmania as the part of a memorial in Remembrance of the life of Professor Sam Carey. The Hastings karst of southern Tasmania had been one of Prof. Carey's first and most frequently visited caving areas in the mid to late 1940's. As reported by Albert Goede in his Obituary to "Samuel William Carey" published in *Speleo Spiel* #329, Prof. Carey was an Honorary Life Member of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club (TCC) - the first organised (oldest) caving club in Australia - and a Life Member of STC.

TCC was founded in September 1946 by Prof. Sam Carey, in the same year that he was appointed as the foundation Professor of Geology at the University of Tasmania. Barely a month later, in his role as the foundation president of TCC, Prof. Carey received a letter (dated October 10th 1946) from the Director of the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau requesting a survey of *Newdegate Cave*, the tourist cave in the Hastings dolomite karst of southern Tasmania. In addition to surveying the "illuminated section" of the Hastings tourist cave, the Director had requested that Prof. Carey (and TCC) investigate the possibility of opening up additional sections of the cave for tourist development.

Lead by Prof. Carey with his detailed knowledge of earth sciences, TCC members explored and survey mapped the known sections of the cave adjacent to the developed tourist section, then in the summer of 1946-1947 commenced exploration of the upstream and downstream sections of *Mystery Creek* - the streamway underneath the illuminated tourist section of *Newdegate Cave*. In late December 1946, TCC members discovered the *Christmas Cave* extension beyond the *Pophole* near the upstream sump and a few months later (in early 1947), cavers were able to dig through the silt in the dry downstream sump (or siphon), discovering and surveying the extensive passages further on. During their second visit beyond the sump in March 1947, TCC members discovered the *Mystery Chamber* and the so-called *Binney Caves*, named in honour of the TCC patron - the Tasmanian Governor: Sir Hugh Binney. The *Binney Caves* chamber was reached by ascending the wall of the *Mystery Chamber* using a fixed wooden ladder that was assembled beyond the sump. In July 1947, Prof. Carey was able to present a detailed survey map of *Newdegate Cave* on behalf of TCC to the Director of the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, together with a progress report of work undertaken

and the new discoveries made by TCC members. Drawn at a scale of 40 feet to one inch, this 1947 survey plan of *Newdegate Cave* also included "spot heights" showing the height in feet below the cave entrance gates; the streamway was shown as -103 feet and the topmost point in the *Binney Caves* chamber (subsequently re-named as the *Binney Chambers*) was shown as -33 feet from the entrance.

Rising floodwaters in *Mystery Creek* prevented further access to the back reaches of *Newdegate Cave*, so Prof. Carey lead a number of surface trogging trips to search for entrances on *Caves Hill* above the tourist cave, looking for possible vertical caves connecting into the *Newdegate* system. In frustration at not finding another all-weather dry route beyond the sump in *Mystery Creek*, it was decided to excavate the clay and boulder fill from a tube passage that extended towards *Binney Caves* from the "*Wee Three Crack*", just beyond *The Cathedral* in the tourist cave section. It is unclear who initiated this project – excavating the descending phreatic tube heading towards *Binney Caves* - but it is highly likely that it was inspired by the geological knowledge and wisdom of Prof. Carey. Surface exploration also continued and in 1948 a vertical swallet was discovered; described as a "chasm entrance" and originally named as *Erebus*, this cave was explored by Prof. Carey and TCC members to a depth of 275feet, but when no connection was gained into *Newdegate Cave*, more concentrated effort was placed on the tunnel excavation. Affectionately known at the time as "The Dig", TCC members spent numerous weekends over a period of nearly four years (from 1947 to 1950), until excavation of the descending, then ascending 110feet (35m) long tube (*Binney Tunnel*) finally broke through into the upper level *Binney Caves*, in April 1950. The Governor: Sir Hugh Binney was escorted through the tunnel in September 1950.

As mentioned in Albert Goede's recent obituary, Prof. Carey remained active in caving with TCC till 1953, when university commitments and family affairs put further constraints on his available free time for caving. However, in more recent years, following the formation of the Tasmanian Cave & Karst Research Group (TCKRG) in 1985, Prof. Carey became more actively involved in speleology again, attending many meetings. He gave TCKRG members several impromptu and prepared talks about the early days of caving in Tasmania, including the excavation of *Binney Tunnel* at *Newdegate Cave* along with mention of early speleological exploration adventures in other parts of Tasmania when vertical caves were explored with rope ladders and wire ladders, or simply going hand-over-hand on hemp and sisal ropes. During the early years of TCC, Prof. Carey had also given the first club members some commando type training similar to that taught to the Army Special Forces in the caves at Mt. Etna during the war years. He also related some of his earlier wartime activities including the use of caves at Mt. Etna (near Rockhampton in Queensland) for training commandos in guerrilla warfare and underground survival techniques (in total darkness) prior to their active military engagement in New Guinea or Malaya.

In a detailed article relating to survival techniques for long term military occupation of caves – published in TCKRG Journal #5 – Prof. Carey describes the use of tropical caves in SE Asia as hide-outs for military personnel or for caches of food and weapon supplies. He outlined the content of the one-week training courses for army personnel in the Mt. Etna caves, eight operatives at a time, and although some of his training methods involved now outmoded techniques, many of his teachings are still fundamental concepts practiced by cavers today in relation to the conservation of caves and exploration, mapping, and survival in caves. He describes how to find and enter cave entrances without leaving tracks and the essential need of having a second light source, suggesting either a torch with spare batteries and globe or a hurricane lantern that is not blown out by strong draughts. He gives suggestions for subtle route marking using dropped tree leaves as occasional trail markers and small piles of arranged stones at passage junctions when surveying a cave, describing the basic techniques for cave surveys, including determination of elevation changes between survey stations without a clinometer, recording detail of physical features and climatic variables including bad air, draughts or noxious gases and finally different methods of drawing cave maps. Prof. also gives detail about rock climbing techniques, use of safety ropes and abseiling, rope ladder methods and use of pitons. In addition to describing methods to avoid attack from enemies including setting booby traps for unwary invaders, Prof. Carey described how caves can be used for long term occupation and survival by utilising speleothem dripwater as drinking water and foraging for wild "bush tucker" food from the jungle, that can be supplemented with a diet of cave animals, including bats and cave stream fauna. He also details how to make a small electricity

generator underground for charging miners cap lamps and heating. Finally, in addition to demonstrating techniques for moving through caves in total darkness including the use of small luminous disc markers at strategic intervals, Prof. also gives some instructive techniques to relieve the boredom of being in caves for long periods of time!

The formation of STC occurred in December 1996, just after the 50th anniversary dinner of the TCC. From the mid-1980's to mid-1990's there were three caving clubs in southern Tasmania: Southern Caving Society, TCKRG and TCC and all three clubs were beginning to founder due to waning enthusiasm with too few office bearers having too many responsibilities including duplication of effort of other clubs. During 1996, when the amalgamation discussions took place in Hobart, despite being a foundation member of TCC that was potentially going to lose its name entity, Prof. Carey was one of several former active cavers that supported our amalgamation, replying to a questionnaire that included a suggested name change. However, our new (present) club: STC, incorporates a single word from each of the three former club names including the word "caverneer" in its title as "Southern Tasmanian Caverneers", a word that was coined by Prof. Carey in 1946, so in giving Prof. the last word on caving, I give thanks to the life of Samuel William Carey and his caverneers in Tasmania. As a life member of TCC, he continued his life membership in STC, receiving *Speleo Spiel* publications and from time to time offering feedback.

Following the morning tea gathering at Prof. Carey's memorial on Sunday June 16th, there were a number of short testimonial speeches delivered in the Geology Lecture Theatre at TASUNI. In recent email correspondence with Tanzi Lewis from the Dept. of Geology at the University of Tasmania, she states that the memorial gathering was well attended with guests coming from Nevada, USA; Sydney, Townsville, Fiji, WA and Melbourne and all around Tasmania. Giving a brief overview of the gathering, Tanzi Lewis described the events that took place at the Sunday memorial for Prof. Sam Carey. After the welcome to guests by Professor Ross Large, the Director of CODES (Centre for Ore Development and Exploration Studies), speakers included some of Carey's former PhD students and academic associates: Paul St John spoke on - "Carey's role in tectonic theory"; Professor Pat Quilty - "Carey the man"; David Leaman - "Carey down to earth"; Dr Max Banks (a former TCC member) - "Carey and the Department"; and John Elliston "Carey challenges orthodoxy". Over 70 guests attended the memorial luncheon where a number of tributes were read including excerpts from an email forwarded by Arthur Clarke detailing some of Prof. Carey's contribution to organised caving and "caverneers" in Tasmania, as well as his influence on me as a student, when I commenced university studies in 1970 attending the first ever Geology I Summer School. The after lunch tribute titled "Anecdotes from an undergraduate in awe" was delivered by Professor David Groves from the University of Western Australia.

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Khazad Dum (2) (JF4): 6 May 2002

By Janine McKinnon

Party: Janine McKinnon, Steve Phipps, Ric Tunney

KD was already partially rigged and as Ric and Janine had not been to the bottom for over 15 years, and Steve had never bottomed, we took the opportunity and also offered to derig the streamway. After losing an hour in Hobart due to communication problems over our meeting point, we got away at 9.15am.

The journey was without incident and we reached the cave entrance at 11.15am. It was smooth running to the 28m pitch. This was the first of the two that were not already rigged. Due to the well-placed hangers and the simple rig needed for this pitch, we were quickly down. Similarly, the 21m pitch - the other unrigged pitch - was quickly rigged from two hangers forming a Y-belay and directing the rope down the middle of the cleft with no rub points. This avoids the bad rubs described in "Vertical Caves of Tasmania".

We reached the streamway about 1½ hours after entering the cave. Water levels were low, particularly for mid-Autumn. With all pitches rigged reasonably out of the waterfalls (some very creatively) we stayed sort of dry to the bottom.

Ric and Janine did the last 42m pitch while Steve stayed in the Brew Room. There are two new P-hangers forming two rebelays and avoiding rub points. These, and a knot half way down, made the pitch much slower than our old "chuck down a rope and let the last person add rope protectors" method.

As there were only three in our party we had only planned to derig the streamway. With packs getting heavier as ropes were added, we decided to keep together on the way out. This slows the party down. Also, some of the creative rigging took acrobatic skills to get up (and off at the top!)

Janine's light died at the top streamway pitch and she was forced to do the rest of the cave using her Tikka reserve light. Ric's light died before the 28m pitch and he too was forced back to his Tikka. Tikkas are just useable. Their diffuse beam does not throw shadows and makes depth perception very difficult. This is a lesson in greater use of low beam on longer trips.

Otherwise, the exit went smoothly. We left the cave at 10.30pm and returned to Hobart.

Welcome Stranger: Welcoming Strangers at Welcome Stranger (JF 229):

9th May 2002

By Steve Bunton

Party: Stephen Bunton, Bruce Haywood (Derwent District Forester, Forestry Tasmania), Harold (The welder) and Todd (The Work Experience Student).

Further to the land-use issues raised from the Mt Field National Park Management Plan, I was contacted by Bruce Haywood and he suggested that we get together for a bit of discussion about the management of Welcome Stranger. I said that the cavers were willing to help provided that ongoing problems were mitigated. The main one of these being ongoing illegal entry. I wanted to see the cave gate repaired and even a boom gate placed on the road near Westfield Rd to make the cave that much more remote in order to preserve it.

To this end Bruce had set events in train already, by organising a welder to fix the gate and asked me if I would come along. I was lucky that I had only few classes that day and could get off school. Since I teach Environmental Science and I was managing caves and talking to cave managers etc, they were even willing to call it professional development, so I was pleased.

We needed the four of us because we had to lug the generator to the cave entrance.

As it was the extension leads only just reached to the gate. The bars were in much the same state as when I saw them Christmas 2000. We managed to bend them

back and weld them up adding a few strengthening bars as well.

I then took Harold and Todd over to the proper gated entrance and down to the stream. On the way down, I managed to slip on some humic mud and fall forwards heavily, pranging my hand quite badly but it was survivable. The stream wasn't flowing. I gave the others a bit of an interpretation whilst I was there and on the way out I read the signage to see that I was happy with the visitor access restrictions and information. It seemed to me that part of the problem was that there is a lot of black humic mud being transported into the cave from this top entrance as opposed to the sand and lighter stuff in the lower entrance.

I was happy that the other two had received a small taster as a reward for their efforts confident in the fact that they'll probably never be able to find their way back there again.

Harold and Todd had never been caving before but thought it an interesting and their days work was a worth while undertaking. Todd was in Year 12 but he wasn't doing any pre-tertiary subjects because he didn't like to work too hard, however, he was going to "applicate" (sic) for a TAFE Forestry next year. He liked the idea of drip torches and 1080 and suchlike but

in the end he remarked that he'd be happy never to do anything like dragging that generator around through the bush. I told him he was lucky it wasn't pissing with rain as forecasted! Bruce then said that all their trainees get asked if they mind the rain. After a few hours they reckon they could probably put up with it for a while longer. "How about another forty years?" he then asks.

The next step is probably the establishment of a "Cave Management Committee" (for want of a better term!) consisting of Bruce, Ian Household (NPWS Karst Geomorphologist), Nathan Duhig (Forest Practices Board) and myself. I'd be very keen on some track marking along similar lines to that done by Rolan in

Croesus Cave and Bruce was keen for the club to undertake some photo-mapping to chart the caves degradation or recovery. This is a project which was started by Kevin Kiernan but now is unlikely to be continued by him.

It was good to spend a few hours in the car with a land-use manager I'd never met before and get to know him, strike up a cordial relationship and hopefully begin a fruitful relationship. For me it was a pretty cruisy day, compared to the average caving trip. I was even back in class for my last lesson, which, co-incidentally has Bruce's daughter in it.

Niagara Pot (2) (JF29): 17 May 2002

By Joe Farrell

Party: Mad Phil, Geoff Wise, Joe Farrell and visiting Illinois caver John Roth.

Mad Phil picked John up from the Airport and we all met at Geoff's place at 10am - this was a good time. It's rare to get this kind of a sleep in before a trip to the Junee.

By 1.15pm we were gearing up outside the wonderful entrance. A rainforest stream drops over an overhanging rock face and falls about 10 metres onto a boulder choke in the doline. Climbing down through the boulder choke got us our first taste of dampness for the trip to come. An immediate 9m pitch with a squeeze between two big boulders was the first pitch. Further wriggling and climbing down the dribblesome steeply dipping bedding brought us to the next pitch of 9m. I can't remember what this was like, nor the next pitch of 14m but one of them was in the stream and was wet. The following climb of 13m, next two 6m pitches and a 24m pitch were also damp. The pitches were rigged from naturals and eye bolts.

The rope packs were frustrating to carry down because the rock tended to snag everything. Infact the bedding plane was narrow enough so that with all the snags you couldn't have fallen down it even if you'd wanted to. Snagging wasn't an issue on the climb out because most of the protrusions pointed upwards.

At the bottom I think we followed a different route to the one on the survey in "Vertical Caves...". We ended up somewhere where Phil and Geoff and Jeff had found a lead on a earlier trip. This was through an awkward slot to a 20ish m pitch immediately adjacent to another

20m pitch. John and I couldn't understand why Mad Phil was rigging this 'hard to get at' pitch when we had a perfectly good one right next to us. Apparently Jeff said it didn't go anywhere but we all secretly suspected the two pitches connected at the bottom. Ultimately they did - we just took the difficult way down which Phil expertly rigged from a tape knot jammed in a crack (backed up to a bomber secondary). "Buttsie would be proud of me" said Mad Phil.

We followed maybe another 40m of passage from this last pitch. It was down a severely steep tube which required quite a bit of chimneying to negotiate. Near the bottom of this we found a survey marker with "42(?)" written on it. There was the continuing gravelled streamway at the bottom which we couldn't get to without a rope. I tried, but the only available foothold collapsed under my weight. We judged it, time to turn around.

We also removed a flat rock blocking a squeeze near the end of the very last pitch. It was drafting nicely so Phil backed through and found there was more work to do to continue further. We left it. Near this point we found some impressive twigged plant debris protruding from a layer of limestone about 60cm thick. It was calcified but looked more like fossils than simple calcified flood or sump debris.

We exited the cave at 9pm so were underground 7 and a quarter hours. In my opinion the entrance to Niagara was the most impressive part. The rest of the cave was just boring and dodgy due to mobile rocks at pitch heads.

Gormenghast (JF35): 18 May 2002

By Joe Farrell

Party: Steve Phipps, Mad Phil, John the American, Serena Benjamin, Grace Cumming, Angela Jackson, Yoav Bar-ness, Shecani Piscitelli, and Joe Farrell.

This was a Tas Uni Moles trip led by Moles personelle with a couple of STC tagalongs.

We hired a 'people mover' and hit the road by 8.50am, picked Angela up in New Norfolk and met Mad Phil

and John in Maydena. This second meeting was unplanned but very welcome - I guess John was after a slightly easier trip after our Niagara trip the day before. The nine of us had no trouble finding the cave. The weather was nice so we went down this cramped, wet dark hole to spend the day.

I think we were underground 4.5 hours. This was quite enough. The formations at the bottom are very pretty but it takes a lot of thrutching and chimneying to get there. The new cavers of the group found it very fun and no one had problems beyond moderate physical exhaustion while climbing back up to daylight. Shecani initially thought she was claustrophobic but was forced to get over it very quickly. I was the only one who got very cold. I think this was from not moving through the cave very fast, squeezing in the wet streamway, and not eating enough chockie. From this uncomfortable experience I've learnt to adjust my apparel to accommodate the speed the group moves at.

We put in two handlines on the chimneys but used no other rigging. Quite a few batteries were used and unfortunately some may still be in the cave. The packaging I bought them in broke open inside my pack and then my pack had a small blow-out. It was a while before we realised that my pack was where the AA's everyone kept finding were coming from. Both shoulder straps also broke from the base of my pack during this trip and the drawstring broke the day before. Gormenghast was its last trip but considering I dragged it round the world it's done pretty well.

Before heading back to the 8 road we had a look at the entrance to Growling Swallet. This impressed the new cavers I think. We were back in Hobart by 8pmish so three of us went up to Steve's place to see the slides of Frankcombe Cave when Grace, Steve and I visited. (see trip report on page 4)

Threefortyone (JF341): 19 May 2002

By Phil Rowsell

Party: Alan Jackson, John Roth (USA), Phil Rowsell

I was playing guide to a USA caver over for a long weekend. I had taken John down Nigara Pot with Alan and Joe, on Friday to check him out and look at the extension down at the bottom. I think he enjoyed the trip but was pretty tired and complained of the small and narly passages. He also wasn't used to re-belay, but did really well obviously a fairly experienced caver. I had hoped to get into Splash Pot on Saturday as I had promised Jeff Butt I would pull some gear out of there, but this was a non starter for John! He wanted something easy, so we headed in with Joe's Uni group down Ghormagast and give him a bit of helping hand. John complained again about tight and narly passages again until he got down to the pretties! Man, a hard man to please.

With an easy previous day, he was up for something a bit more exciting. I decided to take him for a quick look see around 341, at least this has some big passage!! Alan decided to come up and join us. The track was pretty good but did a bit of tape work on the way up, just because it would be dark when we came out and I had been on this track for awhile. We headed in the cave and John immediately started whinging about the small passages. I told him to shut up as it would open out soon. I think he didn't believe me.

Once at the drops, he seemed to brighten up a bit. I rigged the pitches and was please how well John did the airy re-belay on the last pitch. We dumped SRT gear and headed of to the first crystal pool. Totally dry, which was a surprise as there has been water in it

before. A quick lunch stop, then off through the crawls to the crystal chamber. We decided not to stop and have a look here, but headed up the Goat track and followed the railway tunnel to the start of the Enterprise section to look at the stalls there. I would have dearly loved to head off down there, but not today. We continued along the tunnel to the end before heading back.

Johns knee was playing up but I said he had to see the Dinosaurs mouth. I found the rift OK, but spent awhile trying to find the climb up. Eventually Alan found a bit of a passage going off, called me, and bingo that was it. We were soon at the Dinosaurs Mouth. Always pretty impressive to see, which I think Alan and John would agree. No time left to do anything else so we headed on back out. John again did pretty well crossing the re-belay and we were soon safely back on surface.

I think John really like this trip as he has stopped slagging how small and narly the Florentine caves were now. He had finally found some nice big and pretty caves. We headed back to Hobart for a few beers, before he flew out on Monday. He gave the club a \$50 donation which was really nice of him, saying he will be back soon. A good guy, we'll head down to Ida Bay next time.

This was my last trip underground for awhile in Tasy too. I need to head back to the UK to check out the folks and the English summer! I have managed 49 trips underground (some 330 hours) since late Dec, which works out to be about a trip every 3 days. Not to bad going, but plenty more to do. See you all in September!!

Choose your own trip report... If you liked the Choose your own adventure in the Spiel 328 then feel free to write your own and send the pieces to me. Greg hates them 'cos they're hard to catalogue so lets have some more...

Lifted from the internet (as a space filler) from the National Geographic. Com News site at http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/04/0427_cavesextremophiles.html

Scientist Journeys Into Caves for Clues to Extreme Life

*John Roach
for National Geographic News
April 30, 2001*

Caving is a highbrow sport. It takes intellectual prowess in the disciplines of geology and hydrology to know how a cave forms, and thus how to identify where hidden passages lie, said Hazel Barton, a microbiologist at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado.

Barton should know. She started caving as a teenager and has become one of the world's foremost cave cartographers. Today, she employs her uncanny ability to seek out caves as part of her work in studying extremophiles—organisms that thrive in environments where human life could not. "The majority of life on the planet is microbial and living in an environment that is inhospitable to humans," said Barton. "It is quite amazing."

Alternative Survival

Caves are void of sunlight, and therefore lack organisms that need sunlight or the products of photosynthesis for survival. This means caves are an excellent place to go in search of extremophiles. Studying the organisms that are found there can provide insight on how life might survive on other planets.

Extremophiles that thrive in Greenland's ice caves, for example, may be similar to life on Jupiter's moon Europa, which scientists believe to be covered in ice. Similarly, extremophiles living in the underwater caves of the Yucatan in Mexico might have much in common with bacteria that live on Mars, which some reports indicate may have water beneath its surface.

Barton and other scientists speculate that extremophiles from Mars or some other planet could thrive on Earth today. "It is certainly possible that organisms can survive interstellar travel, and Mars and Earth have been seeding each other for 3.9 billion years," said Barton. "That is a lot of spit swapping."

The biological diversity of extremophiles, like the wide array of life forms in the Amazon rain forest, may also hold secrets to the preservation of human life on Earth. Barton's research leads her into caves in search of extremophiles that may serve as antibiotics to treat infections and diseases such as tuberculosis.

"Caves are pretty starved environments," she said. "[Extremophiles] have to use pretty potent weapons to fight off scavengers. If we can harbor those chemicals, then the possibilities are endless."

Caving With Care

True cavers are a tight-knit group that do not readily share information about the whereabouts of holes in the ground. To do so, they say, could lead to human exploitation that results in the extinction of species that may yield cures to devastating diseases, or cause the contamination of freshwater—25 percent of the world's total—that is stored in caves and limestone.

The caution is seen as necessary because many caves are trashed by vandals out for a good time. Safety is also a concern. Many careless and poorly prepared spelunkers have become lost inside caves or even died for lack of proper equipment and training.

"We want to educate people not to harm caves," said Barton. "It is really important to get correct training, to learn correct technique."

Efforts to educate people about the importance of caves and the fascinating secrets they harbor include a new IMAX movie, *Journey into Amazing Caves*, which opened recently in theaters across the United States. The movie, produced by MacGillivray Freeman Films, has been released in conjunction with the publication of two books on caving by the National Geographic Society. Barton is featured in the movie and is co-author of one of the books.

